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ABSTRACT

"Artists in Canada" is a bilingual union list of documentation files on Canadian artists held by the National Gallery of Canada Library and by 22 libraries and art galleries across the country. More than 42,700 artists are represented in "Artists in Canada," with biographical information, as well as locations for files. Originally compiled manually, "Artists in Canada" has been automated since the late 1970s and has been accessible internationally on the World Wide Web since 1995. "Artists in Canada" is also available in print format. A new edition, published in 1999, is a volume of nearly 750 pages. This paper provides an overview of "Artists in Canada." Topics covered include the Canadian context, documentation files, formats, partnership with CHIN (Canadian Heritage Information Network), entries, bibliographic standards, searching capabilities, and future directions. A chronology from the 1920s to 1999 is included. (Contains 13 references.) (Author/MES)

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Artists in Canada: a National Resource

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Paper

Artists in Canada is a bilingual union list of documentation files on Canadian artists held by the National Gallery of Canada Library and by twenty-two libraries and art galleries across the country. More than 42,700 artists are represented in *Artists in Canada*, with biographical information, as well as locations for files. Originally compiled manually, *Artists in Canada* has been automated since the late 1970s and has been accessible internationally on the World Wide Web since 1995 at http://www.chin.gc.ca.[1] *Artists in Canada* is also available in print format. A new edition, published in 1999, is a volume of nearly 750 pages.

Canadian context:

The origin of *Artists in Canada* is rooted in the history of the National Gallery Library.[2] In the 1920s, when the National Gallery of Canada had been in existence just over forty years, curatorial staff began assembling documentation files on Canadian artists. An estimated 5,000 files had been collected by 1956, when the first librarian was appointed.[3]

These files are essential research tools, particularly important within the Canadian context. Until very recently, the history of Canadian art was not written in monographs, scholarly journals and retrospective exhibition catalogues, but rather in unlikely periodicals, such as the *Canadian Theosophist*,

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in small, privately printed exhibition notices, and in reviews in local newspapers, which have never been indexed.[4] When J. Russell Harper's *Painting in Canada* appeared in 1966, it was the first comprehensive survey of Canadian painting from its beginnings in the seventeenth century to its diverse modes of expression in the twentieth century.[5] In the Canadian university curriculum, the history of Canadian art was not defined as a discipline until the 1960s, and the development of supporting research collections across the country is a still more recent phenomenon.[6] Consequently, until very recently the bibliography of published material on Canadian art and artists was sparse.

Publishing in the history of Canadian art is now flourishing, and the documentation files on Canadian artists are still an invaluable source of information. They contain primary research material which has accumulated over the span of eighty years, and are often the only source of information available on emerging and lesser known artists.

Documentation files:

The Documentation Centre at the National Gallery of Canada Library holds files on the National Gallery of Canada, on Canadian art schools, galleries, and societies, and on Canadian and non-Canadian artists, museums, collectors, writers, lecturers, and trustees. The files on Canadian artists are the most frequently used, and the only ones incorporated into *Artists in Canada* at this time.

From the beginning, the definition of an artist in Canada has been interpreted broadly. Similarly, the National Gallery of Canada Library will open a file on any artist for whom we have documentation, without passing judgment on artistic merit. The files encompass artists working in a wide variety of media: painting, textiles, sculpture, pottery, video, graphic design, installation art, architecture, photography, bookbinding, and many others.[7]

Individual files typically contain so-called "ephemera", such as artist information forms, press clippings, exhibition announcements, postcards and articles from unindexed small-press periodicals. Files vary in size from a single item to several hundred documents.

The artist information forms, devised by the National Gallery Library, are of particular interest because they are submitted by the artists themselves. We distribute the standardized forms across the country, inviting artists to provide not only a curriculum vitae, but also biographical details, such as their variant names, representing agents, preferred media, principal works, and other information. In the past, the forms were often handwritten, and occasionally illustrated with original sketches.

Formats:

In 1969, library staff at the National Gallery of Canada prepared the first recorded checklist of the files in the Library's collection.[8] Typed in double columns on a manual typewriter, this unassuming document was the modest beginning of *Artists in Canada*. It listed the names, as well as birth and death dates, where known, of approximately 6,800 artists. A supplementary checklist was published in 1970, and updated versions of *Artists in Canada* were published in 1972 and 1975. In addition to the list of artists' names and dates, the 1975 edition included the media in which artists worked and the province or territory in which they resided.

In 1976 information concerning the National Gallery's holdings of documentation files on Canadian artists was entered into the *Artists in Canada* database of the National Museums of Canada's National Inventory Program (now called the Canadian Heritage Information Network, or CHIN). The database was used to generate the Gallery's 1977 publication *Artists in Canada: Files in the National Gallery Library*.[9]

As technology raised new possibilities, a number of factors coalesced. By 1982, *Artists in Canada* had become a union list with twenty contributors. A number of enhancements followed: new fields were added to the records to enrich searching possibilities, the database was restructured to accommodate its rapidly increasing size, a bilingual *Data Dictionary* was compiled to provide protocol and standards for decentralized data input, new contributors signed on, and a *Contributors' Guide* was prepared to outline procedure for off-line data entry and for modifications to records already residing in the database.[10]

It was a great honour when the 1999 edition of *Artists in Canada* received the Melva J. Dwyer award, given under the auspices of ARLIS/Canada, the Canadian chapter of ARLIS/NA, for an exceptional reference or research tool relating to Canadian art and architecture.[11]

CHIN:

The National Gallery Library maintains *Artists in Canada* in partnership with the Canadian Heritage Information Network (CHIN). Launched in 1972, CHIN is an agency of the federal government, initially created to develop a comprehensive inventory of Canadian museum collections and to provide collections management services to institutions in all regions of the country.[12] On the World Wide Web, CHIN is an electronic gateway to Canada's rich cultural and natural heritage. Among its ambitious roster of services, it has established databases for humanities, natural sciences, and archaeological sites, representing collections of Canadian museums and heritage institutions. CHIN also provides access to a series of specialized bibliographic and reference databases, which contain a wide range of information of interest to museums. *Artists in Canada* is one of the reference databases hosted by CHIN.

Entries:

In the print version of *Artists in Canada*, a typical entry provides the artist's name and, when known, the date and place of birth and of death, the media or techniques used by the artist, and the institutions that hold a file on the artist. Cross-references are provided when an artist is known by more than one name, and an asterisk following the name indicates that it has been established according to the *Anglo American Cataloguing Rules*.[13]

The database contains additional information on the artists' citizenship, sex, and last known place of residence, as well as supplementary biographical information. The database also contains fields that assist in the management of the database itself, recording, for example, when and by whom an entry was created and when it was last updated.[14]

Bibliographic standards:

Up to twenty-four searchable fields are possible for each entry. To ensure consistent and validated information, work has begun on name authorities and

controlled vocabulary is used in the artist technique field. Since *Artists in Canada* is bilingual, in French and English, controlled vocabulary enables the system to provide equivalent terms for searching in either official language. Canadian and non-Canadian place names have also been standardized on the basis of language.[15] These bibliographic standards facilitate precise searching and ensure reliable results.

Searching capabilities:

Artists in Canada is the largest and most comprehensive list of Canadian artists in existence; consequently, searching by the name of an artist is often the first point of entry. Although the database is not an officially designated authority file, by virtue of its unique and extensive coverage, *Artists in Canada* is an essential tool for identifying Canadian artists. The Artist Index consists of all artists' names and their variant forms. Approximately 2.6% of the records in *Artists in Canada* have achieved authority status.[16] The work of verifying names and establishing authorities is ongoing.

The database also supports advanced searches, allowing the researcher to combine a number of fields. This capability enriches searching possibilities for groups of artists who meet specific criteria, such as female photographers working in Vancouver.

Future directions:

Artists in Canada is a key resource within CHIN's constellation of information resources. But as scholarly work in Canadian art advances, the research community requires much more information than a single database, or even a constellation of databases can provide. Today's needs and expectations are for authoritative information, delivered immediately, with citations followed by full text, and accompanied by images. The challenge for the future is to provide links across diverse resources, addressing audiences with any number of research needs.

In April 2000, consultations began in fourteen centres across Canada, aimed at shaping a vision for The Virtual Museum, supported by funding from the federal government. CHIN, in partnership with member museums and other federal institutions, is striving to arrive at a decentralized model, with national content and global reach via the Internet.

Achieving integrated access to heritage information across a vast, bilingual country is an enormous task. CHIN pioneered the concept in the 1970s, when it provided Canadian museums and subscribers to CHIN services with an electronic gateway to inventories of Canadian museum collections. CHIN now has nearly thirty years of expertise in providing access to vast amounts of information. That expertise - working with partners, making collaborative decisions, dealing with different audiences - is at our disposal.

At the National Gallery Library, our next step is to launch the Library's online public catalogue on the World Wide Web, linking it to *Artists in Canada*. With this link in place, we could potentially bring together a suite of online resources within the National Gallery, ranging from the Library's visual resources, which currently reside in a local database, to Multi MIMSY, the Gallery's collections management system and Cybermuse, the Gallery's virtual showcase of the permanent collection. From there, taking one step at a time, we envision a future with seamless links from the artist's name to a wealth of text and images stored

not only at the National Gallery of Canada, but in collections across the country. *Artists in Canada*, a collaborative resource of national significance, is the foundation stone for shaping the vision.

Notes

1. For the history of *Artists in Canada* with bibliography see Cyndie Campbell, "Documenting Canadian Artists: The History of Artists in Canada," in *Artists in Canada: A Union List of Artists' Files / Artistes au Canada. Une liste collective des dossiers d'artistes* (Ottawa: National Gallery of Canada, 1999), pp. 12-19.

2. For the history of the National Gallery of Canada library see National Gallery of Canada, *Library and Archives Collection Development Policy* (Ottawa: National Gallery of Canada, 1996), pp. 11-12, and Jo Nordley Beglo, "Collecting for a Nation: The National Gallery of Canada Library: Past, Present, Future," Paper delivered to the Art Libraries Society of North America (ARLIS/NA), Vancouver, British Columbia, 29 March 1999. National Gallery of Canada fonds, National Gallery of Canada Archives, Ottawa.

3. Susan Hasbury, "Documentation Files in the National Gallery Library," Paper presented by J.E. Hunter to the Canadian Library Association, Calgary, Alberta, 14 June 1985, p. 1. National Gallery of Canada fonds, National Gallery of Canada Archives, Ottawa.

4. Jo Nordley Beglo, "The Origin and Development of Canadian Research Collections in Support of Study and Teaching in the Visual Arts," Paper delivered to the Art Libraries Society of North America (ARLIS/NA), Montreal, Quebec, 13 March 1995. National Gallery of Canada fonds, National Gallery of Canada Archives, Ottawa.

5. John Russell Harper, *Painting in Canada: A History* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1966).

6. T.H.B. Symons, *To Know Ourselves: The Report of the Commission on Canadian Studies*, 3 vols. (Ottawa: Association of Universities and Colleges of Canada, 1975-1984), v. 1, p. 37.

7. *Artists in Canada*, 1999, p. 20. We include artists who were born in and worked in Canada, artists who were born elsewhere but who have spent their working lives in Canada, and artists who were born in Canada but spent most of their working lives abroad.

8. *Check List of Canadian Artists' Files: In the Library May 1968 / Liste des dossiers d'artistes canadiens. À la bibliothèque mai 1968, Ottawa*, 1969.

9. *Artists in Canada*, 1999, p. 12-13.

10. Peter Trepanier, "The Artists in Canada Reference Database: Revised, Updated and Enlarged." *Art Documentation*, 14, no. 1, (Spring 1995), p. 10. See also Sylvie Roy and Peter Trepanier, *Artists in Canada Data Dictionary* (Ottawa: National Gallery of Canada Library, 1994) and *Artists in Canada Contributor's Guide* (Ottawa: National Gallery of Canada Library, 1994).

11. The Award was established by the Canadian art library community in 1985

to honour the distinguished career and contribution of Melva Dwyer, who for thirty-one years was Fine Arts Librarian at the University of British Columbia.

12. Information about CHIN, its mission and services is available at the web site: http://www.chin.gc.ca. For an historical overview see Wendy Thomas, "Developing a National Web Site: The Canadian Experience," Museum International, no. 204 (1999), pp. 14-19.

13. Michael Gorman and Paul W. Winkler, eds., *Anglo-American Cataloguing Rules*, 2nd ed., 1988 rev. (Ottawa: Canadian Library Association, 1988.)

14. Artists in Canada, 1999, p. 25.

15. Ibid., pp. 14-16. The fields in the database include artist/maker, artist's other names, citizenship, references, authority status, technique, sex, address date, address city, address province, address country, birth date, birth city, birth province, birth country, death date, death city, death province, death country, file location, record creation date, record update date, record number. Place names have been standardized according to the following rationale: National Resources Canada's *Canadian Geographical Names Data Base* (Geonames.NRCan.gc.ca/english/Home.html), which lists place names recognized by the Canadian Permanent Committee on Geographical Names, has been used as the authority for Canadian geographical place names. Apart from a few notable exceptions, as in the case of Canadian federal lands (including Indian reserves), the Committee recognizes only one official name - French or English - for inhabited places (villages, towns, and cities) in Canada. All other place names are given in full in English and French.

16. Ibid. A list of biographical sources to be consulted in conjunction with artist references field (ARRF) is appended to the *Data Dictionary* and available with *Artists in Canada* at the CHIN web site.

Chronology

1920s	National Gallery of Canada begins collecting documentation files on Canadian artists.
1956	First librarian is appointed at the National Gallery of Canada. Number of documentation files is estimated at 5,000.
1969	Checklist is of approximately 6,800 files in the National Gallery of Canada Library is published: *Check List of Canadian Artists' Files: In the Library May 1968 / Liste des dossiers d'artistes canadiens. À la bibliothèque mai 1968* (Ottawa, 1969). Microfiche production of selected files begins.
1970	Supplementary checklist is published: *Supplementary Check List of Canadian Artists' Files: In the Library March 1970 / Liste supplémentaire des dossiers d'artistes canadiens. À la bibliothèque mars 1970* (Ottawa, 1970).
	Updated cumulation is published: *Check List of Canadian*

1972	*Artists' Files: In the Library September 1971 / Liste des dossiers d'artistes canadiens. A la bibliothèque septembre 1971* (Ottawa: National Gallery of Canada, 1972)
1975	Interim list is published: *Artists in Canada: Files in the National Gallery Library / Artistes au Canada. Dossiers à la Bibliothèque de la Galerie nationale* (Ottawa, 1975). Incorporates additional names, corrections and cross-references made since 1972. Includes media in which the artists worked and the province or territory in which they resided, as well as a list of files available on microfiche.
1976-1977	Information concerning the National Gallery of Canada's holdings of Canadian artists files is entered into the *Artists in Canada* database in the National Museums of Canada's National Inventory Programme.
1977	Updated cumulation is published from the database: *Artists in Canada: Files in the National Gallery Library / Artistes au Canada. Dossiers à la Bibliothèque de la Galerie nationale* (Ottawa: National Gallery of Canada Library, 1977). Contains information found in 1975 edition, as well as new entries and corrections made prior to March 1977. Includes art dealers known to be associated with artists, and indicates availability of a file on microfiche.
1978	National Library of Canada publishes survey, *Fine Arts Library Resources in Canada*, recommending that the National Gallery Library "be an active participant in the determination of a coordinated register with indexes of the contents of important documentation files." (vol. 1, p.100); potential for *Artists in Canada* as a union list is discussed at a meeting of the Canadian Art Libraries Society (CARLIS).
1979	Meeting is held at the National Gallery Library to discuss the scope and eventual implementation of the *Artists in Canada* union list.
1980	Institutions listed in National Library's 1978 survey of *Fine Arts Library Resources in Canada* are sent a letter explaining the union list project and requesting lists of files to be added to the database.
1982	Union list is published: *Artists in Canada: A Union List of Files / Artistes au Canada. Une liste collective des dossiers* (Ottawa : The Library, National Gallery of Canada, 1982). Includes information on the holdings of twenty contributing libraries and art galleries. Following the 1982 edition, the database is restructured, and the number of fields in the record increased from nine to thirty.
1985	*Artists in Canada* database is on-line in its new form, with enriched searching possibilities.
	Union list is published: *Artists in Canada: A Union List of Artists' Files / Artistes au Canada. Une liste collective des*

1988	*dossiers d'artistes* (Ottawa : National Gallery of Canada, 1988) Contains nearly 40,000 entries, almost doubling the size of the 1982 edition; reports holdings of twenty-four contributors.
1993	Discussion begins between National Gallery of Canada Library and Canadian Heritage Information Network (CHIN; formerly the National Inventory Program) regarding revision of the database and procedures for decentralized input.
1994	Data dictionary is compiled to provide protocol and standards for data input from contributing institutions: *Artists in Canada Data Dictionary and Le dictionnaire de données d'Artistes au Canada* (Ottawa: National Gallery of Canada Library, 1994).
1994	*Artists in Canada Contributors' Guide* and *Manuel d'utilisation pour les collaborateurs de la base de données Artistes au Canada* is compiled to outline procedure for off-line data entry and editing.
1995	*Artists in Canada is available on the World Wide Web http://www.rcip.gc.ca.*
1999	New edition is published: *Artists in Canada: A Union List of Artists' Files / Artistes au Canada. Une liste collective des dossiers d'artistes* (Ottawa: National Gallery of Canada, 1999).

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